

Miguel Perez Jr.'s Story

Miguel Perez Jr. was born in Mexico and came to the United States with his family at 8 years old. He became a legal resident at age 11. Perez's two children and parents live in Illinois and are U.S. citizens. He enlisted shortly before 9/11 and was supposed to receive an expedited path to citizenship under a 2002 executive order issued by President George W. Bush, but due to an administrative oversight Miguel never received appropriate information about the naturalization process.

Perez received a general discharge in 2004. He suffered a traumatic brain injury from combat. He has struggled with depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts for years. Afflicted with post-traumatic stress disorder, he had problems with substance abuse and was eventually arrested and convicted in 2010 for a non-violent drug charge.

He was placed into removal proceedings while imprisoned in Illinois and turned over to ICE custody in 2016. ICE moved to deport Perez in March 2018.

Miguel's lawyer, Members of the Illinois Congressional Delegation, and Chicago immigration groups spent almost 18 months advocating for his return to the United States. Governor Pritzker pardoned Miguel in August 2019 and he was allowed to return to the U.S. on a two-week permit to reapply for citizenship. He became a citizen in early October, 2019 and is now living in Chicago again.